

# **BANZO TEZUKA**

## **MY LIFE IN JAPAN AND GERMANY:**

### **A 20TH CENTURY ADVENTURE**

Interviewee: Banzo Tezuka

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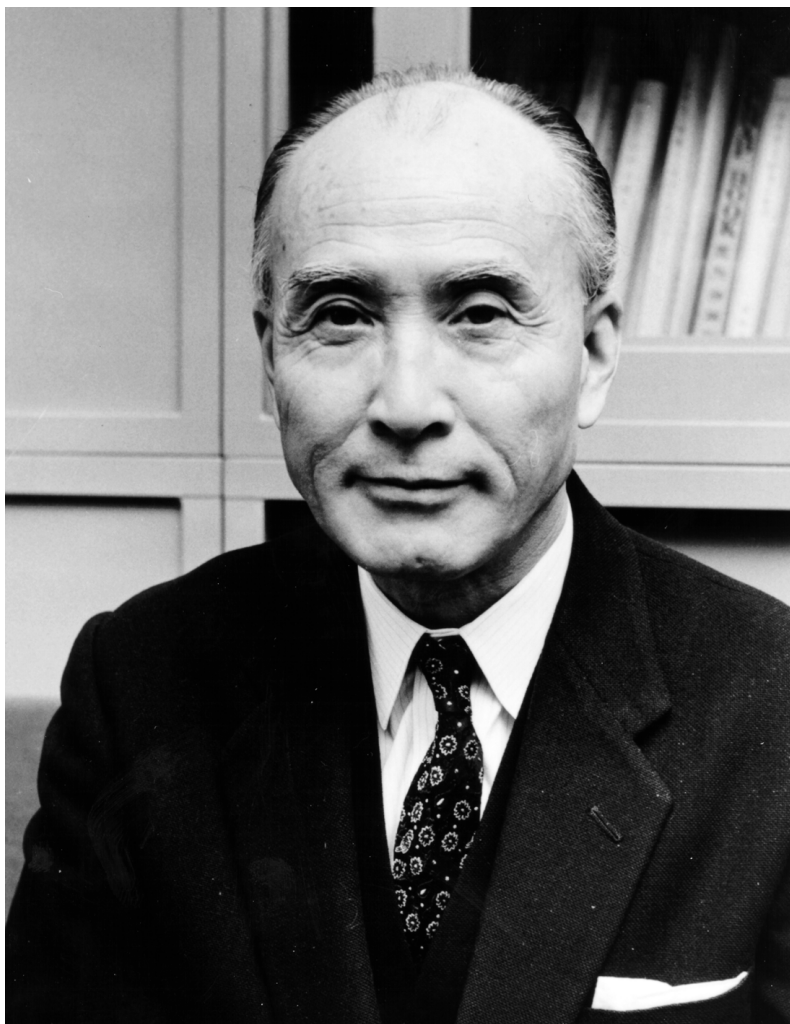
The interviews with Banzo Tezuka were begun in December 1989 at the request of UNR's vice-president for university advancement. Tezuka's oral history is not typical of those produced by the UNOHP, but rather it is essentially a personal narrative arising from his responses to somewhat broad, general questions. His story is studded with insights into twentieth-century Japanese history and culture. He was born in 1903 into a prosperous family in Nagano Prefecture, traveled to Berlin to complete his education after World War I, experienced the Weimar cultural revolution, worked in the Japanese embassy in Berlin in the 1930s, married a German Jew, and, with his wife and their child, fled the Nazis across Russia to Manchuria, returning to Japan in the summer of 1940. During World War II, Tezuka worked for the Japan Foreign Trade Council as an expert on Germany. Following three years of unemployment after the war, he was hired by the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce, eventually rising through the ranks to become executive director. He retired in 1972 and died on January 3, 1994, following a lengthy period of poor health.



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MY LIFE IN JAPAN AND GERMANY:  
A 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ADVENTURE

Composed by R. T. King from  
oral history interviews  
with Banzo Tezuka

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Oral History Program

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# CONTENTS

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Preface	ix
Chapter One	1
Chapter Two	19
Chapter Three	35
Chapter Four	45
Index	63
Photo Credits	67



## PREFACE

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**I**N THE 1970s, Mr. Banzo Tezuka, a retired executive director of the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce, began making annual trips to Reno to visit his daughter, a UNR librarian. Mr. Tezuka enjoyed his Nevada experiences, and he was treated well by university employees during these visits. By 1989 he was considering making a gift to UNR of some very valuable property in the Roppongi sector of Tokyo. In December of that year, while Tezuka was in town, UNR's vice-president for university advancement asked me to record the life story of this potential benefactor.

I was uninformed about Japanese history and culture, and on such short notice there was no time to do preparatory contextual research. We proceeded with the interviews anyway, meeting for a total of about eight hours during Tezuka's stay, but this is not oral history of the sort that the UNOHP usually produces—it is essentially a personal narrative arising primarily from Tezuka's responses to rather broad, general questions.

Although Tezuka spoke English, he was much more comfortable in Japanese. His daughter, Yoshi Hendricks,

interpreted many of my questions and most of her father's answers. In the process, she was also able to provide some information that Tezuka could not at first recall, but that he confirmed as she presented it. The text at hand, then, is a composite, derived from the memories of Mr. Tezuka and his daughter and edited into a first-person narrative in Tezuka's voice.

Banzo Tezuka's story is studded with insights into twentieth-century Japanese history and culture. He was born in 1903 into a prosperous family in Nagano Prefecture, traveled to Berlin to complete his education after World War I, experienced the Weimar cultural revolution, worked in the Japanese embassy in Berlin in the 1930s, married a German Jew, and, with his wife and their child, fled the Nazis across Russia to Manchuria, returning to Japan in the summer of 1940. During World War II, Tezuka worked for the Japan Foreign Trade Council as an expert on Germany. Following three years of unemployment after the war, he was hired by the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce, eventually rising through the ranks to become executive director. He retired in 1972.

Banzo Tezuka died on January 3, 1994, following a lengthy period of poor health. As of this writing, the status of his intended gift to the university remains uncertain.

R. T. KING  
1999

## PHOTO CREDITS

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The two photographs of the Berlin Romanisches Café on pages 24 and 25 are courtesy of the Süddeutscher Verlag Bilderdienst in Munich, Germany. All other photographs are courtesy of Yoshi Hendricks.



## CHAPTER ONE

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THE NAME TEZUKA, which means “foot of the cemetery,” originated some seven hundred years ago with Tezuka no Taro Mitsumori, a vassal of the warlord Kiso Yoshinaka. Tezuka no Taro is a descriptive name meaning “Taro from near the cemetery.” Although the Tezuka name is now spread all over Japan, it is still concentrated in its area of origin and is known as a name from the southern Japanese Alps.

My mother, Moto Tezuka, was born in Meiji One, the first year of the Meiji era—1868 by the Western calendar. Before the Meiji era Japan was a feudal nation with big land owners, who had tenants or serfs, and some small farmers who possessed their own land and were working for themselves. It was like the Russian peasants and the czar, but in Japan the farmers were independent persons, a little bit different from the Russian type. With the Meiji restoration the tenant farmers became free persons. They did not have as much freedom as ordinary citizens in the West, but the restoration made them free.

My mother was born in the village of Yoshida, where her father, Kuhachi, was a small farmer who worked his

own land, growing mostly rice. (Roku, my mother's mother, was from Matsumoto-mura Soyano.) Before Meiji, Kuhachi's father was the head of a small farmers' association in Yoshida. The local tax officer, who was a samurai, needed an influential farmer to determine how much rice could be collected from the farmers every year, and my great-grandfather was chosen. This man's name was Shinzaemon Tezuka. That's a very old name. Kuhachi inherited his land from Shinzaemon. Both were rice farmers on the family land, which was handed down from generation to generation, eventually going to my father upon his marriage to Moto, who was an only child.

My father, Ichimatsu, came from Yoshikawa-mura Murai, an adjacent village, and was the second of two sons. It was customary in Japan for a man who married into a family that had no male offspring to take that family's name so as to carry it on. When Ichimatsu married Moto, he took the name of Moto's family and left his own family behind; therefore, I have no record of his parents' names. My paternal grandparents could give Ichimatsu to Moto because he was their second son. An elder son would inherit the property of his *own* father, so you did not give your first-born to marry into a woman's family; but the younger son might be given to a family who had only daughters, and he would take the name of that family and inherit its land.



Hirooka-mura Yoshida, our village, was on a large plateau near the Japanese Alps, two hundred and forty kilometers northwest of Tokyo. This region was the center of Japan's silk industry, and the silkworm cocoon was the main source of income for most families. Although Hirooka-mura is now part of greater Shiojiri City, it was then a village one train-stop south from Matsumoto, which was the second largest city in Nagano



Prefecture, second only to the seat of the prefectural government, Nagano City. I was born in Hirooka-mura Yoshida on November 18, 1903, and given the name Banzo, meaning “evening son” or “last son,” because I was the youngest of eight children—three boys and five girls.

My father, Ichimatsu, was a farmer who grew rice, corn, millet, and other grain, but his largest crop was the mulberry leaf, which is the sole diet of the silkworm. The harvested rice and other grains were more than was needed for our sustenance, but they were not intended for income—for this our family depended on the sale of silkworm eggs. My father had the special advantage of being the only licensed silkworm egg cultivator in the village. He sold the eggs to farmers who produced silk cocoons for factories that made fabric. Of course, he cultivated some cocoons as well, and he sold those to the silk factories, but my family’s main income source was the eggs.

Our family had a dog and a cat, and I had my horse, and I raised rabbits. (Raising rabbits is easy.) As the youngest child I was treated very well by everybody in the family, and I was never given chores or made to work in the fields; I would just go to school and come home and play somewhere with other children. In the busy summertime my family hired many occasional laborers, but I never toiled. One after the other my sisters were married into other families, eventually leaving only my two brothers to take care of the fields of rice and the cultivation of mulberry trees and silkworm eggs.

My family was quite well off, I think: no family that was not could have afforded so many laborers in the summer—hired laborers coming from different places. My father was one of the few farmers in Yoshida who paid sufficient taxes to qualify to vote in national elections, so

he was politically quite influential. He was also very influential socially. When there was a feud here or there, he would be the person who would resolve it and other disagreements. He was also the middleman and go-between for marriages and other arrangements. My father was busy all the time with such social services, and he himself did not have much time to engage in farming, so he left that to my two brothers.

Our house stood alone on a big farm, surrounded by fields and woods. In order to play with my friends, I would often go to the cluster of houses in the center of the village about two miles away; but I was very close to the land and nature, and in the countryside there were many interesting activities for boys. There was a river near my house, and one of the things we loved to do was to dam the river with rocks. Then we would sometimes put baskets in the river to catch fish. That was one of our pastimes in the summer, when I spent much of my time at the river with a net catching loaches, a fish which my mother prepared. I also caught butterflies, dragonflies, fireflies, and crickets in the fields. Another thing to do was to make bows and arrows from the branches of willows. They made fast-traveling, excellent sets.

In the winter it was cold inside our wood-and-paper house. The only source of heat was the *kotatsu*, a framed charcoal heater with something like a quilt draped over it—you wore clothing to keep your back warm, but you kept your feet under the quilt. Flying kites was a favorite boys' game during the month of January, and when the rice paddies turned to solid ice in the winter they offered perfect skating surfaces—I made skates out of my *geta* (wooden clogs) by attaching two parallel pieces of wire from their fronts to their backs; but in the winter I mostly stayed home, keeping warm sitting around the *kotatsu* under layers of clothes, eating tangerines and playing

*karuta* (card games) . . . and we would play alphabet games. The entire winter kids would play those games.

Matsumoto then had a population of some thirty thousand. Beginning when I was perhaps ten years old, from time to time on Sundays I would walk to Matsumoto alone to see a silent movie with the ten *sen* (one-tenth of a *yen*) allowance my mother gave me. The walk took an hour and a half to two hours. Like others, children and adults alike, I wore an informal kimono when not in my school uniform, and I walked in *geta* or *zori* (straw sandals). With this type of footwear there was always the danger in long-distance walking that the *hanao* (straps) might break. When they did we knew how to make temporary straps from the bark of the new shoots of mulberry trees, which combined strength and flexibility. Leather shoes were worn by officials such as police or mailmen or teachers, and students when in uniform. Shoes, like uniforms and hats, were made to order.

There was only one movie theater in Matsumoto, and the movies were American. Men (and sometimes women) seated on either side of the screen gave ongoing commentary on the action and the meaning of the subtitles to these silent movies. Since the audience did not know English, accuracy of interpretation was not an issue. I distinctly remember one comment: "They are now playing 'Home, Sweet Home,' the national anthem of England." Some years later I learned that the national anthem of England was "God Save our Gracious King," not "Home, Sweet Home!" Entrance to the movies was seven *sen* for kids, and I would look forward to spending the remaining three *sen* on pieces of baked potatoes from a street vendor after the movies on my way home. Remembering the old time is very interesting.



My parents did not have any specific ambitions for me, except that they didn't want me to be a farmer. They already had two sons who were farmers; if I also became a farmer, they would have to divide the land for me, too, and that would reduce the land that each would get. Therefore, although they had nothing specific in mind, they were hoping that I would acquire some education and get a profession. Nothing beyond that. I, myself, had no aspirations.

There was an elementary school in Hirooka-mura, Jinjo-koto Shogakko. Of the eight grades offered, the first six were compulsory, and I was always the top student, number one. Annual school excursions were among the high points of my grade school experience. There was a one-day trip every year, and then once in your entire grade school experience you got to go to Ise Shrine, the important Shinto shrine. That was a five-day trip.

Boys such as me were expected to go on to a higher school, but I had no idea what I wanted to be. In Japan one simply goes on to the next thing that awaits. For secondary education I had to go to the city. I went to the only high school in Matsumoto, either taking a train, which was one stop, or walking, which was an hour and a half to two hours each way . . . nothing for that time. In the wintertime, when it was cold, I lived in Matsumoto and came home on the weekends. There was a family that put me up. It's a system: you pay, and they give you room and board in a family home.

By the age of thirteen or fourteen I had started to enjoy reading, but there were no libraries or any such things where I lived. Then when I went to high school in Matsumoto, there were a number of bookstores, and all sorts of new magazines came every month. I read constantly. At that time there was a great social and cultural movement coming from Western Europe. [This

was during the period called the Taisho Democracy, 1912-1926.] The new way of painting was the French Impressionism. There were also ideas of personal freedom and the development of individual capacity. I became interested in modern art, French paintings, and poetry.

At that time there was also in Japan a general new tendency toward free marriage. Until then, marriage was only arranged by parents and their go-betweens. But there was a belief developing that the man and woman should marry freely and not be forced to marry this or that person. So this was among the new tendencies of Taisho Democracy. A number of scandals resulted all over Japan when, in very high families, the lady would run away from the arranged husband. These stories were big affairs.

During my last two years of high school, I was a member of the track and field team, competing in the 100-meter and 200-meter sprints. During the summer break I stayed in Matsumoto for training with the team for all-prefecture intramural competition in the fall. In my senior year Matsumoto High won first place. I took first in the 100-meter competition, and the relay team for which I ran the first leg won the 400-meter relay.



Before I completed secondary school, Ichimatsu, my father, delegated his role as head of the family to my eldest brother, Shoichiro, by consensus, and the family was divided according to Japanese tradition. Shoichiro became head of the main branch of our family, and the second son, Ryohei, became head of a branch family. At this point my father and all his dependents, except for Ryohei and his family, became Shoichiro's legal dependents in the main branch of the family. Most of the farmland was given to Ryohei, and Shoichiro received



Matsumoto Fukashi High School track and field team, 1921. Banzo Tezuka, back row, fourth from left.

money to build a rice mill on the major thoroughfare of Yoshida.

Ichimatsu died of a stroke in the early spring of my last year in high school. He had wanted secondary education for all of his sons, but an incident during Shoichiro's first year of high school had crippled Ichimatsu's enthusiasm. My mother told me the story in confidence when I was in high school: The family had received notice from the school one day that Shoichiro's tuition was delinquent. Upon questioning, it was discovered that Shoichiro, age fifteen, had spent his tuition in a Matsumoto brothel. Ichimatsu disowned him. Later, Ichimatsu's older brother brought Shoichiro home and made him apologize by writing with blood from his finger that he would never repeat such an act. Although he was readmitted to the family, the event marked the end of Shoichiro's schooling. Ryohei only completed the eighth grade.

After high school I had no great visions or aspirations for my future, but I went to Tokyo to compete nationally for entrance to the Imperial University, now Tokyo University. Chances of being accepted were one in twenty-three. When I wired home to say that I had failed, Shoichiro said I should try any other university of my choice. I tried Waseda, the best of the private schools, which had been founded by the politician, Shigenobu Okuma. I knew that many students from Shinshu (the pre-Meiji name for Nagano Prefecture) were at Waseda, and the chances there were one in seven. When the scores were posted, I had made it. I had the sixth highest scores among those tested. As it turned out, there was no one else from Shinshu in my class.

During my one year at Waseda University I studied political science. I had no desire to make a career of politics or government, but politics interested me, and if

you do not know what else to take, just apply for political courses—you can change later or add some other things. I did not enjoy that year. The boys who came from other places, mainly from Kyushu, were somehow more mature as men, and they were always engaged in vulgar talk about women and sex. I felt very lonesome, and I was not interested at all. Tokyo was also too big for me and the summer was too hot. (Shinshu, my region, was very cool.) Tokyo's atmosphere was somehow dirty and humid, and I did not like it.

By a stroke of good luck, Shoichiro's rice mill was a great financial success: the price of rice doubled soon after it opened. With his profits he built a silk factory next door, but this enterprise fared less well. Shoichiro basically had no business experience; he was intelligent but did not have the necessary know-how. The market for silk declined before he knew it, and his silk factory never made a profit. To try to save it, he went into debt. Before the end of my freshman year at Waseda, I got notice from him that he was no longer able to send the monthly forty yen to support me in college, so I dropped out and returned home.

Shoichiro died of a heart problem in the fall of that year. For some time to come, my mother, Moto, was to continue as head of the main branch of the Tezuka family. Shoichiro had no sons, so the man who married Shoichiro's oldest daughter, Noboru, took the Tezuka name and continued the main line of the family. (He was a young schoolteacher named Eiichi, from a respected family in Kotobuki-mura Akagi, a village adjacent to Hirooka-mura to its east. Although Shoichiro had failed, the good reputation of Ichimatsu, Moto, and the Tezuka family had made it possible to find a man from a highly respected family to become a Tezuka.)



My father and oldest brother had died in the same year, and my grandmother, Roku, had died the year before, and the succession of sudden deaths in the family was a shock to me. I stayed at home for a few months with nothing in mind with respect to the future.



In Matsumoto I had a friend by the name of Ichiro Yonezawa. I had met Ichiro in high school through sports—he was an outstanding athlete, three years ahead of me in school. After failing his college entrance exams, Ichiro coached athletics at Matsumoto High School and stayed around Matsumoto doing nothing in particular. It occurred to Ichiro that, since I wasn't doing anything either, the two of us could go to Germany together. Japan looked to Germany for modern science, and anyone who went abroad to study at the time went to Germany—mostly students and professors with full scholarships from *Mombusho*, the Japanese Ministry of Education. Germany also was suffering a creeping currency inflation which put the buyer of the German mark at an advantage. [Inflation eventually grew to staggering proportions, forcing the German government to revalue the mark. When new currency was issued on October 1, 1923, one trillion old marks were required in exchange for one new mark.]

Ichiro's father, Buhei Yonezawa, owned a technical school in Matsumoto and was an influential man. Buhei had wanted Ichiro to study abroad, but not alone, so he was quick to support our idea, and he got a wealthy Matsumoto merchant by the name of Komatsu to commit fifty yen per month toward my support while in Germany. Komatsu would hand the amount to Buhei each month together with his support for his son.

My mother was very surprised to learn that I was going to Germany, and she was concerned. She said,



*"My mother was surprised to learn that I was going to Germany, and she was concerned. She said, 'Don't you bring home a German bride!'"*  
Banzo and Moto Tezuka, 1922.

“Don’t you bring home a German bride!” Going abroad was an enormous undertaking for any Japanese, and for her own young son to be going to Germany was beyond her comprehension. Mother then revealed to me that at the time Ichimatsu had divided his estate, she had seen to it that a small portion of the land was set aside for me. This land was now sold to help pay for the trip and get me started once I arrived in Germany.

The fastest way to Berlin would have been by the Trans-Siberian Railway, but at this time it was not open to international traffic, freight or passenger. Nor were there steamships specializing in passenger transport—passengers and freight went together. Of the steamship companies that had regularly scheduled departures for Europe, NYK (Nippon Yusen Kaisha) was the best. The fastest voyage between Yokohama and Marseille took forty-five days, and it was another four days to London. Ichiro started out first because he wanted to stop in London to visit his brother-in-law, who was employed by the Mitsui Trading Company. He stayed in London for several weeks, and we met in Berlin about ten days after my arrival there.

I bought third-class passage on NYK’s *Suwa Maru*, a ship departing March 15, 1923, from the port of Yokohama; the fare might have been three hundred yen. I took with me a huge, heavy, old-fashioned suitcase made of heavy leather which contained, among many other things, twenty tailor-made white shirts, a formal kimono set (kimono, *haori*, *hakama*, *obi*, *tabi*, *zori*) with family crest (as seen in pictures of samurai), a navy-blue suit (the only appropriate color), overcoat, hat, and shoes. Everything was made to order and prepared by my mother. The rumor was that things were very cheap in Germany because of the inflation, and one should therefore buy all other necessities of life once there.

There were over one hundred passengers on the *Suwa Maru*, but only seven of us in third class. Third-class passengers were accommodated in bunk beds below deck in one large area, shared by male and female alike, and we had a saltwater bath. We were not allowed up on the other levels unless personally invited by someone in first or second class. This rule was more strictly enforced toward the beginning of the voyage than the end, because toward the end everyone was more or less friends by virtue of having endured nearly forty-five days of confinement on the same ship. Nonetheless, one had to be dressed properly to go up, since one was likely to encounter foreign ladies up there. When below deck, passengers could roam around in their *yukata*, their informal, nightwear kimonos.

There were three intellectual Japanese that I could associate with aboard ship: Yamato, Osaki, and Mizuki. Yamato was in third class too. He was a physician from the Kumamoto Medical School in Kyushu, the southernmost island of Japan, and he was going to Berlin to continue his medical studies. (Japanese medicine came from Germany, and the first professors at the Imperial University were German physicians who lectured in German.) I developed a lifelong friendship with Osaki, who was a graduate of the Tokyo Foreign Language Academy, the university for foreign languages. His major was German, but he did not teach me German on the ship; I had textbooks and studied by myself. Mizuki was a painter who went to Paris, as all Japanese painters went to Paris. Mizuki was interested in reading novels and was a fine man. He later became quite famous in Japan as a painter.

At that time the captains of British and French ships kept houses and mistresses in different ports, and many young Japanese girls went to ports in southeast Asia to

become mistresses—the captains preferred them to the locals because they were more educated and refined. The only woman in third class was the mistress of a French captain. She had boarded in Osaka or Kobe. She had a tattoo of a palm tree that impressed me, and she told me stories about her life and customs. After a couple of years with the French captain she had gone home and encouraged local girls to go back with her, and she referred them to male friends of hers. That was very common at that time.

In our days below deck we did not drink or play cards to pass the time, we just talked. From my bunk I could stretch and see out a porthole, but there was nothing to do. I could sleep anytime I wanted, and it was a very comfortable rest; we were very happy. There were three meals served every day, which we ate below deck sitting around a table. The Japanese-style food was brought to us, and the meals were satisfactory. The first- and second-class passengers ate Western-style meals. To Japanese, anything imported was considered high-class. (Even now, a French meal is thought to be superior to a Japanese one.)

The *Suwa Maru* stopped at Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Penang, Colombo, Aden, and Suez before arriving at Marseille. It took two to four days to load and unload freight at every port except Aden, and I considered myself fortunate to be able to go ashore and see those places. I would get off the ship and look around and make observations. Everything was new to me; everything was fantastic. In Hong Kong the Chinese coolies could carry such heavy burdens on their backs! They went barefooted, something that was unthinkable in Japan. They bent over to keep a big crate on their backs, and the perspiration ran down their fingers and dripped off the tips of their noses. In Singapore and

Penang the working people were also barefooted, and this was amazing, because the ground was so hot. The passengers threw coins into the water, and boys and young men dove into the water after them. They made their living that way.

In Shanghai, the rickshaw coolies waited for guests to leave the ship. There were so many coolies that they competed with each other. They shouted, "Please get on my rickshaw!" When I sat in the rickshaw the coolie started running without asking where I was going. Thirty or forty meters from the harbor, he turned and asked, "Where to?" They all did this, fearing some other rickshaw would take their fare away, but it did not cost much. Shanghai was a big international city, and the area near the harbor was modern in the European style. By contrast, Japan was not yet international. Hong Kong, a crown colony of England, already had a skyline like San Francisco. Everything was very new and interesting to me. I had never seen that type of city.

When the ship went through the Suez Canal, I saw desert for the first time in my life. The Arabian Desert was very impressive to me, because Japan is all covered with green. The ship made port at Suez and Port Said at the Mediterranean entrance of the canal. The Mediterranean Sea was very different from the other seas we had crossed—so mellow and quiet. Our ship went close to the Sicilian coast, and I could see the houses and everything. That was awe inspiring. The dreams of my youth became a reality, and so this was very exciting.

When I got off the ship at Marseille, I saw two women in their forties embrace each other and kiss. I learned as a boy in Japan that only men and women kissed, but women did not kiss each other, so that was very interesting for me. I couldn't believe two women kissing each other! A Japanese person helped us get to the train

station and buy a ticket for Berlin—this is how he made his living. He told me that Marseille is full of pickpockets; he said that there was a university for pickpockets there, and that the final exam was to take someone's tie off while he was walking down the street! Of course, he exaggerated.

From Marseille I went by train through Switzerland and stopped overnight in Bern. They had Pullman cars at that time, and I ordered a Western-style meal on the train. I was very happy.





## CHAPTER TWO

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I ARRIVED IN BERLIN on May 1, 1923. A May Day general strike of all workers was under way, but it did not affect me and I made no personal judgment. I was quite neutral about socialism, capitalism, and democracy.

With another traveler I took a horse-drawn taxi straight from the railway station to a *pension*, a kind of boarding house. Then it was necessary to get some cash. I carried a letter of credit from the Yokohama Specie Bank, the only bank in Japan licensed to deal in foreign currencies, and I took the letter to the bank's German branch, where I converted it into British pounds. The mark was very unstable, declining steeply in value from day to day, and if you held marks from today to tomorrow, you might lose them all. But the pound was easy to convert into marks, so I kept my money in pounds.

I stayed at the pension for a couple of days while I looked for a room to rent. In Berlin, many families had large flats or apartments, and some had spare rooms. They wanted foreigners as tenants, because they could

get the rent in foreign currency. It was easy to find a room; and then I just wandered in amazement while waiting for Ichiro to come from London. For a few months after he arrived we did nothing, just looked around, but I learned some German through day-to-day conversation, textbooks, dictionaries, daily newspapers, and everything around me. It wasn't difficult for a young man to learn German very quickly.

When I left Japan it was not clear to me that I wouldn't qualify for admission to a college in Germany. Only after I began an intensive German language course in September did I learn that I couldn't go from there to the university; but I was not disappointed, because in those days getting a degree was not the object. And I could study in so many other ways: daily life itself was a big study, seeing and hearing everything. I was an observer of German culture and life, and after a year in the language program, I had made a lot of progress in the German language.



In the second year Ichiro's father came to Germany to see if his son was up to no good. Ichiro had started gambling. Not only was he spending his allowance for this, he was also gambling with the money that was to come to me. Ichiro's father finally stopped sending money for me. I now had little money, and my original purpose in coming to Berlin (to attend the university) had proved to be impossible. Nothing was clear, and I was unsure of what to do. Nevertheless, I never considered returning to Japan.

I had sold my inheritance to go to Germany, and I had not set up a branch of my family, but going to Europe to study and learn was a big achievement; it was no time to return to a little village where there was nothing. I wanted to continue progressing, and returning to Japan

would have been regression—I would have been a failure and lost face. I decided to stay in Germany a little longer. My stay eventually stretched to seventeen years.

For a while I had no steady employment, but I met many people and was able to do translations or be a tour guide part-time. I always worked with my mind and had no laboring jobs. Union labor regulations would have made that very difficult. They couldn't do anything to me because I wasn't harming anyone, but if I took manual labor jobs, the rules were strict. Regulations concerning continued residence in the country were not so strict, however. For years I retained my student status. Later, when the Nazis came to power, I was working at the Japanese embassy and had diplomatic immunity.



There was a very small Japanese community in Berlin, mostly students or faculty sent by the Japanese universities and by the Ministry for Education. It was customary for university instructors to get scholarships or stipends from the government so that they could have experience and study abroad, and “abroad” meant Germany. Some studied and some did not, and they weren't working very hard—they just wanted to have a good time, to broaden their horizons. I did not have much in common with this group.

At first I did not make German friends either, but I didn't notice any racial discrimination. Germany was a defeated nation (just like Japan became after the Second World War), and its only interest was how to fight everyday life. Of course, there were so few Japanese that there was no reason for discrimination. We were paying tourists and paying residents, and there were no common laborers among us. Most Japanese in Berlin were educated: doctors, lawyers, and artists. This did not

disturb the German people. Later I had many more German friends than Japanese friends.

My first five to eight years in Germany was a time for adjustment, to become Westernized. I had to learn how to live like an ordinary German in daily life: how to eat breakfast, how to take baths, and how to behave when I was invited by some family. I had to accept everything. The latter half of my seventeen-year stay in Germany, I was Westernized much more than now—I've been back in Japan now almost fifty years.

I went very often to operas; I went to concerts, movies. These had quite an influence on me, and, of course, I got more Westernized in my cultural life. I also became influenced by general social tendencies at that time—new trends in music, painting, literature, dancing, and everything. There were so many new tendencies coming out in the Weimar Republic! The German Reich had been very stubborn in their way of thinking, but after their defeat in World War I, everything was free—personal freedom and personal rights. This, of course, was very impressive.

I became interested in all sorts of art . . . paintings in the new style. Modern painting impressed me very much, but Dada was something I could not accept. Too extreme. Bauhaus was very interesting, not only for its architecture, but also because it ignited an influence on all thinking. Classic ballet was the standard of dancing in Europe, but now came out more individual dancing, personal dancing, which was not there before. And atonal music was quite new for me. I did not like atonal music; I could not accept it; but I thought it was very interesting. Everything was new to me. Every artist tried to do something new.

I went to the opera (it was expensive), concerts, and movies. Artistic movies were mostly German, and the

new popular movie movement of the 1920s and 1930s came from America—Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks . . . Johnny Weissmuller as Tarzan. The principal theme of movies from the United States was the frontier. Frontier movies and comedies such as those of Buster Keaton came from America, but German movies were all very serious. I went very often to movies, as they were not so expensive.



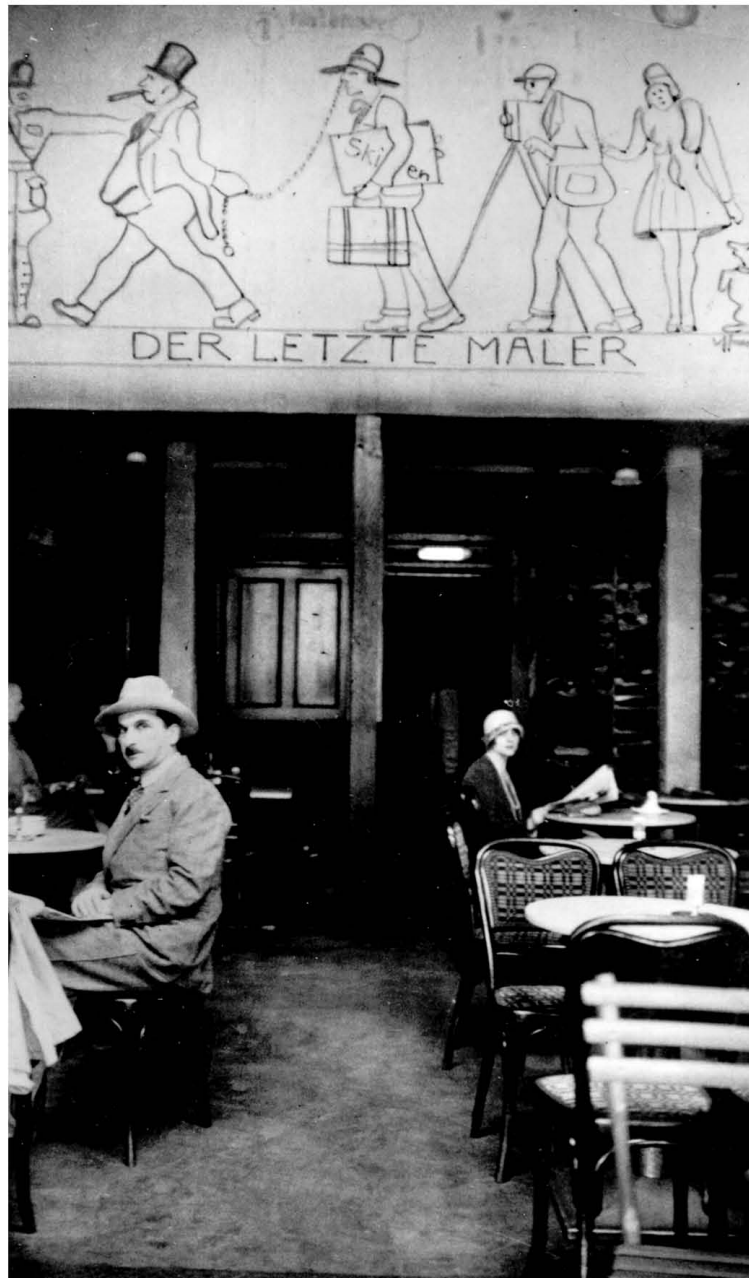
I began to frequent the Romanisches Café, a very well-known coffee house just under the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche. Intellectuals and artists gathered there . . . and people who wanted to be artists, but weren't. Movie directors, foreign correspondents, priests and ministers, schoolteachers and bankers also met in the Romanisches Café. Thirty daily papers from other countries would be there for patrons to read. Sets of the major encyclopedias lined the walls: the French *Encyclopedia LaRousse*, the German *Brockhaus*, the English *Britannica*. The intellectuals discussed; and if they could not agree, they could take down an encyclopedia and show that "this is true, and so you are wrong!"

Soon, any free time I had was spent at the Romanisches Café. I was the only Japanese customer, but it was very easy to make friends, and the Germans I met there were people with whom I had a lot in common. Many of them had no particular profession, because they were people who were not satisfied with just doing mainstream work: they wanted more intellectual stimulation. I found the Romanisches Café to be a much more interesting place than the Japanese clubs, and the second two-thirds of the seventeen years that I was in Germany, I practically lived there. I became so well known to the waiter that I could even borrow money

The Romanisches Café, Berlin, 1929.



*"Intellectuals and artists gathered there, and people who wanted to be artists but weren't."*



*"The Romanisches Café was my university, and the Bierstube was my seminar."*

from him if I did not have five pfennig or so to pay for my coffee.

In the evening, after finishing at the coffee house, some of the same group would then go to a beer parlor where we had our *Stammtisch*, a table at which the same people—only the comrades—sit and have the same conversations. There is no “reserved” sign on the table, but it’s understood that this group exclusively sits here. There we had beer or schnapps. The Romanisches Café was my university, and the *Bierstube* my seminar.

One day I was sitting at a table at the cafe when a man spoke to me and asked about me and why I was there, and so we became friends. It was Ernst Bade. He was a good man, and we were close friends during my time in Berlin. A friend from my *Stammtisch* later became the president of the second largest German bank. Another man, who was not so much a friend but my protector, was Erich Maria Remarque. [Erich Maria Remarque, 1898-1970, served in the German army in the First World War. In the 1920s he worked as a sportswriter in Berlin while writing *All Quiet on the Western Front*, perhaps the best-known novel dealing with the war.] He was always a visitor at the Romanisches Café. On several occasions he helped me sell some articles or short stories about Japan, depicting some part of Japanese life. The pay for these contributions was welcome.



I did *everything* to make money: I was an interpreter very often for other Japanese for some meetings; I was paid to accompany a female Japanese tourist to Paris; I sometimes did translations that took months, and I was well paid for that; and I performed in movies. Representatives from the famous German movie company, UFA, came every day to the Romanisches Café seeking an extra—somebody they needed unexpect-



edly—and I very often hired on as one. These were not speaking roles. The Germans called them *Statists*—somebody in the background. They would need somebody for a Chinese fight or to represent some diplomatic figure from an Asiatic country. This work for the movies was very good pay, but you did not know how many days you could work—one day or sometimes a whole week. It depended on how the production progressed.

I appeared in at least ten movies. One was *Storm Over Asia*, directed by V. I. Pudovkin in 1928. I played a Mongol. The movie was reminiscent of Genghis Kahn invading Europe, so even the German extras had to make a face and head like a Mongolian. Another movie I was in was *Der Kongress Tanzt* (Congress Dances) the story of the Congress of Vienna, directed by Eric Charrell in 1931.

I worked for a number of famous directors in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In one film I played a rickshaw coolie who had to pull a fat Chinese Mandarin, but I had no experience in pulling a rickshaw, and he was so heavy that I was lifted up on the hangers and the rickshaw turned over. He fell out and toppled down on the pavement and did not move. So I thought that was the end, that I had killed him; but after a couple of seconds he shouted, “Schnapps! Schnapps!” Somebody came and gave him some cognac, and he came back to life. Since that time, whenever I met him—he also came from time to time to the Romanisches Café—he would say, “Oh, you are my murderer!”



In about 1927 a Japanese lady came to Berlin through America. She knew many influential people in Japan, but she spoke only Japanese, and she was getting the runaround in Berlin. Individual tourists can feel lost.

They need someone to talk to and help them, and I was hired as an interpreter and companion to help her. I accompanied this Japanese lady by train from Berlin to Paris, where we parted. My French was not good enough to serve her in Paris, so she probably sought another interpreter at the Japanese embassy.

I had long wanted to fly, and I had been paid well for this excursion, so I decided to use some of my pay to fly back to Berlin. This would be my first time aloft. I was scared before I got on the plane, but once we were in the air I wasn't so nervous. The plane was a Farman Goliath, a large multi-engined biplane with a cabin for about twenty passengers, and the flight from Paris to Berlin was very exciting. I felt miserable, airsick the whole way, but I was young and the flight was an adventure. When I got off the plane at Tempelhof, the main airfield in Berlin, I was so airsick I laid on the grass lawn for two hours until I recovered.



Another job I took was to put in order a famous physician's papers. These later became an important source for a biography of him. This physician—Professor Erwin Beltz, a German—introduced Western medicine to Japan. He was the man who founded the College of Medicine at the Imperial University (now Tokyo University), which is *the* university in Japan. Dr. Beltz lectured in German, so all the students had to learn German. Later he summoned another German professor to teach in Japan, too, and busts of these two men stand today at Tokyo University. After Dr. Beltz retired from the university, he was the physician for two emperors—Emperor Meiji and Emperor Taisho.

Dr. Beltz married a Japanese woman and later returned to Germany with his family. His son, Toku Beltz, lived in Stuttgart, but came very often to Berlin. He

was a friend of Dr. Alexander Nagai, the chief of the economic section of the Japanese Embassy for whom I worked. The connection was interesting: Nagai's father was a famous pharmacologist who had married a German woman. At that time such things were very rare, and he and Dr. Beltz were good friends because of their interracial marriages.

I became friends with Toku Beltz, and Toku asked me to put Dr. Beltz's life story in order. Since he was a friend, I didn't get paid; it was a volunteer job. I just went to Stuttgart and stayed in his house for about three months sorting out all the scraps, manuscripts, and papers. From this Toku made a book, and I have a copy of it at home in German.



There was only one Japanese restaurant in Berlin—Tokiba, owned by Kobayashi, a defector from the copper mines in New Caledonia. Many Japanese worked there. In about 1926 Kobayashi came to Berlin with his wife and opened the restaurant. He needed somebody who spoke German and could handle the bookkeeping, so he hired me, and I stayed two years with them. The restaurant was successful, and I did well. A couple of times I sent money to my mother, several hundred yen. She didn't write to me, but Noboru, my brother's oldest daughter, did. She kept me informed about my family, and I was never homesick for Japan.

*Zaidoku Nihonjin Kai* was a club in Berlin where most of the Japanese gathered—not more than five hundred lived in Berlin at that time. The club had three billiard tables, and members would meet there to play billiards or cards or eat at the club's restaurant. Two girls worked at the restaurant, and one cook. The cook had defected from a Japanese ship at Antwerp. (Many crew members of Japanese ships defected, because they had



*"Zaidoku Nihonjin Kai was a club in Berlin where most of the Japanese gathered."* Banzo Tezuka (1).

had enough of ships. Most went to Antwerp, Hamburg, or London.) There were lectures at the club, and many famous people came from Japan. From about 1928 to 1930 I was the manager of *Zaidoku Nihonjin Kai*, but that was boring to me. By then most of my friends were Germans, and the Japanese community was not something I belonged to. After two years I left the club. I was tired of it.



The economic depression of 1929 and 1930 in America was also felt in Germany, and this was good for the Nazis, who grew bigger and stronger. As the political and economic climate became more confused, the embassy needed someone who could read German newspapers, analyze them, and give abstracts and reports. In 1931, Dr. Nagai, the chief economic attaché, called me up and asked me to join the embassy and take that role. (He knew me from the Japanese club, and I had been in Germany so long I was a German now, so everybody knew me.) I accepted his offer, but my decision had nothing to do with patriotism—it was just good to get a regular salary and not to have to worry about how to make money; it was an opportunity to lead a stable life.

I went to work in the economic section, reading German newspapers for economic news and preparing reports on what I had read for the embassy staff. The embassy appreciated the fact that I could also help out in other ways. Occasionally they needed someone to interpret when the police would call and say, “We have a Japanese who cannot speak German.” I would then be sent to see what was going on. One summer a Japanese professor I had known in Berlin drowned in the North Sea west of Kiel, and I went to identify him. Such things often happened.

Once the Berlin police called the Japanese embassy: “We caught a Japanese without a passport, and we don’t understand each other.” I went there, but he was Chinese, not Japanese. I could not understand Chinese either. The police told me he had walked without a passport from China to Europe. This is like the Chinese—they are tough. The Japanese are not that tough, and I thought his feat was remarkable. His lack of a passport presented no problem: crossing the Chinese border to Vietnam there were no controls; then from Vietnam to Thailand, India, and Burma . . . they can’t have barbed wire all along national borders. He could get through. He’d buy something in one city and go to the next city and sell it. So he could go from India to Pakistan and from Pakistan to Persia and so on, like on the ancient Silk Road.

As an embassy member, my freedom was not affected by the Nazis when Hitler came to power. I observed the everyday changes in public and private circles—who was killed, who was caught, et cetera—but that did not affect me personally. However, the Anti-Comintern Pact, the big agreement between Hitler, Mussolini, and Japan to oppose Bolshevism, was a topic of much discussion at the *Bierstube*. Of course, all of my *Stammtisch* friends were against the Nazis, but my friends were harmless people. They couldn’t do anything and were no threat to the Nazis, and we continued meeting. In private circles it was very free to talk, not like in Rumania now. The bad things were happening at a higher level.

My responsibilities in the embassy did not change, but daily life did. German rearmament began. Money was put into the defense industry and the military, so commodities started getting scarce, and after a while everything was rationed. I had to go to the city administration of Berlin and negotiate with the chief of

the city to get special diplomatic rations for all members of the embassy. Soon we were getting everything we needed. Ordinary German citizens could not get coffee in 1933 and 1934, so I would take coffee to some of my friends. They were grateful.





## CHAPTER THREE

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I FIRST MET THEA BERGER at the Romanisches Café in 1929 when she was a twenty-seven-year-old medical doctor studying for a Ph.D. in pediatrics. (Child psychology was her dissertation topic.) When we became friends, Thea's parents objected to our relationship because I'm Japanese. Her father was very worried and concerned, and he wrote a letter and put it on her desk—he asked if she could rethink the matter. At that time he did not know me very well, but when Thea didn't change her mind, he got used to me, and I think he came to like me in the course of a couple of years.

Thea enjoyed music and was an accomplished pianist who gave private lessons. When we started going out together, we often went to concerts. She was also quite interested in the arts and humanities, while I was interested in economics, in movies, and in art galleries.

I had my group, and Thea had hers—all the intellectuals and bohemians. She herself was a little like a bohemian character: an intellectual do-nothing, highly cultivated, knowing everything, and interested in so

many things. In Europe between the First and Second World Wars, bohemians were a kind of seasoning for society: they did not contribute to the general welfare in any *clear* way, but they made the society richer, and generally there was such an atmosphere in Weimar Germany. That's something Hitler didn't like, so he eventually banned modern arts and literature as deformed or degenerate.

The rise of the Nazis accelerated my relationship with Thea, who was not only a bohemian but was also Jewish. As Hitler's power grew, she lost many of her Jewish friends—they left Germany for England, America, Argentina, and elsewhere. Then her father was injured in a traffic accident and was confined to his bed for two or three years. Thea's sister had moved to England, so Thea was the only person who could take care of him; also, medical care for him would have been second rate—he was a Jew. Thea vowed to take care of her father as long as he lived.



Thea had consulted a fortune teller after high school, and had been told that she would go to a faraway place. Perhaps that was part of the attraction when we met—she thought that maybe *this* is the person. She also felt that to freely practice her profession as a physician, she needed to be with somebody who would be supportive and leave her alone, rather than somebody who says, “Do this and do that and the other thing.” Apparently my personality suited her. As for me, I found Thea to be educated, cultured, and a very pretty woman. The fact that she was a physician added to the attraction . . . and it was important that she frequented the Romanisches Café!

After we had known each other for about six years, Thea and I decided to marry. This was a transition period

in German society: there was as yet no law prohibiting Germans to marry foreigners, but when Thea went to the marriage license office, the official in charge asked her, “Why are you going to marry a Japanese? Aren’t there any Germans to marry?” She was very offended and she came home: “We’ll go to England and get married over there.” If you lived two weeks in England, you could get married by a justice of the peace, so we stayed in London two weeks and married there in 1935. I did not confer with my family. They wouldn’t have agreed anyway, but they were prepared; they had long known that I would probably bring a German wife home.

Before I was married I had lived in rented rooms, mostly single rooms. I had changed addresses often, but I always lived close to the embassy near the Tiergarten. After Thea and I married, we rented a place at Uhlandstrasse 136, and we were living there when our daughter was born at the end of 1935. We hadn’t planned to have a child in Germany, but it was welcomed—my wife wanted a baby, and we both wanted a girl. That is very unusual, because Japanese people want boys to carry the family name; but I was not in that sense Japanese, and I wasn’t in Japan, so it didn’t matter. I was happy to have a girl.

Thea and I had several friendly disputes about what to name our daughter. In Western society a good name must have a phonetically pleasing sequence. For a Japanese the phonetics don’t matter; only the calligraphic symbols matter. I proposed to name our daughter Naruho, but Thea thought that was an *awful*-sounding name. She had a strong German accent in Japanese, and she exaggerated what she felt was the ugliness of this name by calling it “Nah-rooh-hoh.” The meaning of the name has to do with the head of the rice plant that carries the grain and hangs over because of its

weight. So I was thinking of this beautiful name, which was ugly to Thea—she did not care what it meant, she was not going to name her little girl Naruho. At the time she was studying Japanese, and she found a textbook name, Yoshiko or Yoshi. She thought that was lovely; I thought that was not so good. We resolved the dispute by my choosing how to write it and she choosing the sound. (You can write Yoshiko about thirty ways in Japanese.) So this was a German family, but in the name was a culture conflict.

After Yoshi was born I continued to work at the embassy, and my wife stayed home to take care of Yoshi. My lifestyle did not change—I continued to go to the Romanisches Café by myself. Very often on Sundays or Saturdays, I would take Yoshi to the park or zoo—the zoo was very close to the Romanisches Café—and in the winter I took her bobsledding. My strongest recollection of the things that I did with Yoshi centers around this bobsled: I do not like to write letters, but when Yoshi's birthday would come, Thea would place a piece of paper and a pen on my desk and say, "You write." Yoshi remembers that year after year my birthday letter to her started, "Have seventeen years already passed since we went on the sled?" Every year. "Has it been eighteen years . . . ?" "Has it been nineteen years . . . ?" I wrote to her in Japanese, and the letter on her birthday always began with the sled story.

Yoshi spent her first four years in Germany and was raised in the German fashion. My wife had complete control over raising her; in that capacity she was the big decision maker. German was the family language (everything else was German too, food and everything), and I acted just as a father of a German family. If there had been no Hitler and no Second World War, I would be in Germany today; but with the political situation

changing from day to day, I thought we would be eventually in Japan.



My wife had started learning Japanese at the university a couple of years before we married. At that time I was still assuming that I would stay in Germany indefinitely, but she was more personally affected by the Hitler movement than I, and she must have been indirectly preparing to move to Japan. As a Jew, she was in danger. Eventually all professional licenses of Jews were revoked, and Thea lost her medical license and could not legally work. However, after we married she was protected because she became a Japanese citizen.

Thea's Japanese citizenship enabled her to travel outside Germany. She had gallbladder trouble at that time, and once she went to Karlsbad (now in Czechoslovakia) for treatment and took Yoshi with her. They also went to Italy, but I stayed in Berlin. My wife enjoyed traveling and wanted to get away from the sad, depressive air in Germany. She had a Japanese passport, and Japan was allied with Mussolini, so a trip to Italy was no problem.

Although the Nazis did nothing to Thea personally, as their persecution of Jews deepened she began to feel terror. She kept a small suitcase packed at all times with the minimal needed things. By 1939, anytime the front doorbell rang she'd look through the hole before opening the door; she'd have the suitcase in one hand and Yoshi in the other, ready to go out the back way in case an officer was at the door. Among other things, the authorities were looking for her older brother, who was in Argentina already, or who had escaped somewhere. They were always looking for somebody. The total political and social atmosphere was very, very scary.

We also had other problems. We got food, but it was illegal to sell food to Jews. My wife had ex-patients who felt that she had saved their babies' lives, who would by night bring food or something to the back door. The situation was terrifying. As things became worse for the Jews, we knew that we were going to leave; but we would stay as long as Thea's father was alive, because he needed her physician's care and influence. When he died in the winter of 1939-1940, we began making plans to get out of Germany.

After war broke out in Europe in September of 1939, many new Japanese journalists came in from different newspapers and wire services because Germany was an ally of Japan. These journalists swelled the population of Japanese businessmen and diplomats in the city. Conditions then were good for Germans in Japan and for Japanese in Germany. Nonetheless, for the safety of my wife and daughter, it was important that we leave as soon as possible. I said to my wife, "Japan is a very different, strange country. Are you ready for this?" She was.

I continued to work at the embassy, so Thea did most of the preparing for our departure. A German moving company that provided transportation for many Japanese people came and packed our goods, but we could not ship any big furniture. With the German army occupying France, Holland, and Poland, there was very little ship space available for transporting big furniture. We could send only our grand piano out by ship. Fortunately, we were able to take all of our money. (I had saved a little and my wife had inherited some from her father.) There was a currency agreement between Germany and Japan, and special banks in Hamburg could exchange German money and send it directly to Japan.

Any Japanese who wanted to go home went either by America or by the Trans-Siberian Railway. To go through America, you had to buy a ship ticket, and this was complicated and expensive. The railway was the best possible route—our only concern was that Hitler might start a war against Russia while we were en route. (This, of course, came later.) When we were ready to go, I quit my job of nine years at the Japanese embassy and bought first-class tickets for the Trans-Siberian Railway. I was to make use of my experiences in Germany for the rest of my life, and because of them and my facility in the German language, I would get some jobs that normally only a college graduate could get.



We left Berlin on May 20, 1940. When we departed, four of our friends—two families—came to see us off. Mr. Ernst Bade and Dr. Karl Ritter came. Bade is one of my lifelong friends. He was an intellectual who lived on welfare in Germany and studied his whole life. He was a very interesting person and a very respected man.

We left Berlin by night, and we were the only Japanese aboard. The train could not be routed through Poland, because Poland was demolished and passage was not allowed, so we went first to Riga (Latvia) from Berlin. We stayed in Riga for one night, and the next day we went down south to Moscow, the starting point of the Trans-Siberian Railway. The train went only twice a week, so we had to wait two or three days in Moscow.

As I stood on the platform in Moscow, preparing to board, the Trans-Siberian train looked very impressive. Russian families were saying farewell to their departing people. Eastern Siberia was not developed then, and the train was taking its passengers on a long journey to an uncertain future. The people were listening to melancholic Russian melodies through a radio on the

platform, and they were weeping, saying goodbye. Inside the train, I saw soldiers and people who looked like government officials. They were going from the main part of Russia to Siberian Russia. It's a big country.

The Russians were friendly people, and traveling on the Trans-Siberian Railway train was very convenient. The whole compartment was just as one unit, and the toilet was shared with the compartment next door. Also, the distance between the beds made it very comfortable for traveling. They brought meals three times a day, and you could drink as much tea as you liked. Three times a day I also got a couple of vodkas, because the Russian food in the train was very fat. You needed that vodka to counter the fat.

Along the way we were not allowed to leave the train. In cities like Novosibirsk and Irkutsk, guards shut the blinds on the windows, but the train would sometimes stop at a small town in the woods somewhere, and then we could get out on the platform to have fresh air. They were worried about us seeing things that they did not want us to see. There was already a very tense situation between Russia and any kind of foreigners. They were very careful, but they need not have been concerned about me: my family and I were just travelers.

The Trans-Siberian Railway went as far as Vladivostok—the train couldn't go further east because the width of the rails changed there. We changed trains to the South Manchurian Railway in Manchuri, the border city between Siberia and the Japanese protectorate of Manchukuo (Manchuria). Japan had set up a sort of puppet nation in Manchuria, and from there on it was all Japanese influence.

I hadn't gotten any requests from the Japanese embassy or any agency of the government to keep my eyes open while going through Russia, but after we



crossed the border into Manchuria I was questioned by the Japanese secret police. They were very much interested in what Russia looked like. I could not tell them anything valuable because I hadn't been able to look out the windows, so we talked about other things—Germany, the Hitler problem, and so on. It was just easy conversation.



In Manchuri, for the first time since I had left Japan, I stayed in a Japanese inn, an inn with *tatami* mats. When we dined in the restaurant, my wife sat on a floor to eat for the first time in her life. (In Germany at that time, only Japanese people went to a Japanese restaurant, and my wife had never gone with me to any of the Japanese functions. You didn't take a Western spouse or a foreigner to the Japanese community in Berlin.) That *tatami* inn was the initial contact my wife and daughter had with Japan, and I realized for the first time that I was bringing two foreigners to my culture.

In Manchuri I saw many fruits and things in the shops. In Germany these things were scarce, all rationed, gotten with tickets, but everything was abundant in Manchuri. There was also a garlic smell everywhere. Chinese coolies chew raw garlic all the time to make them healthy; therefore, the smell is strong. (Germans hate garlic.)

I was happy to be back in a Japanese society after seventeen years. Although I missed Germany a little bit, in Germany I had seen how things would be for us in the future. We stayed one night in Manchuri and one night in Harbin . . . a week in Manchuria. Then we went by train to Korea, where we stayed two nights in Seoul. Everything was also very Japanese in Seoul, because Korea was a Japanese colony. Then we sailed to Japan. We boarded the ferry in Pusan and got off in

Shimonoseki. (There was a ferry boat to and fro every day.)

We arrived at the main station in Tokyo on June 10, 1940. My mother was there to meet us, accompanied by a distant relative. To Japanese people it's not acceptable to marry a foreigner, but my foreign wife was a physician, and that immediately made a difference to my mother, because doctors have high status. Still, it was all so strange to her, especially when my wife and daughter and I spoke German to each other. She had a big question, I'm sure, about how this was going to work.

Mother and Thea got along well and liked each other. My wife was good with people in general. As a physician she was used to caring for people, and she had a great interest and enthusiasm (perhaps a naive one) for Japan and the Japanese, so she was able to smooth everything over and do a good job, even though at first she didn't speak good Japanese. (In fact, Thea never spoke good Japanese, but she had learned a bit, and she was an aggressive person, so she tried.)

My daughter Yoshi was also treated like a foreigner, because her appearance was not Japanese. She wasn't half-foreign; she was *completely* foreign. (Americans say she looks Japanese; but in Japan, if you don't look one hundred percent Japanese, you're not.) To children, appearance doesn't matter, but to society it does, and there were songs about Kewpie dolls—she was a Western doll, the cutest thing they'd ever seen. At the station they all said, "Oh, how cute!"

## CHAPTER FOUR

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UPON OUR ARRIVAL in Japan, we didn't go directly to Matsumoto but stayed in Tokyo and rented a house in Koenji. It was not easy for me to get accustomed to daily life—I knew Japan by memory and thinking, but practically everything was different from my life in Germany. I felt like a foreigner in my own country.

It was even harder for my poor wife, who was thirty-eight years old when she arrived in Japan. She wished never to return to Germany, but becoming Japanese was out of the question. She spoke the language with a strong German accent, and her ideals had been formed in German society and through her medical school education; and for real social and ideological reasons, there were some things she could never subscribe to in Japan. Thea was not one to conform or to worry a lot about what other people thought. In some ways she was like a bulldozer carrying out what she thought was right, and cultural adjustment for her was, at best, very clumsy.

Some of our cultural differences were amusing. For example, my wife was Jewish, but she accommodated

Christmas. I came home in Koenji one day during Christmas and she said to me, “Did you see Santa Claus?” or something like that. So I went out and bought Yoshi a tin zoo for a present. (It was something that she wanted.) I told her that Santa Claus had been in a hurry and had asked me to deliver it. Normally I wouldn’t have worried about Christmas, but since my wife mentioned it I had to go out and buy the tin zoo and make up a story.

I could enjoy Japan the first year I was back, because the country was not yet at war with the United States. I went to my home where I had lived as a child, and I also went to Matsumoto and to Osaka and was taken around and introduced everywhere. My relatives were in the same places I had left them. They thought of me as the uncle who lived in the city; to them I was the person who had gone around the world and, by their standards, knew a lot of things. But I had a foreign wife, which made me different, and living in Tokyo made me different. Publicly stating that one has succeeded is awkward in Japan, but I had not failed, and they could be proud of me. They were happy to see their relative return.

During our first summer in Tokyo my wife and daughter found the city too hot, so I sent them to Karuizawa, a resort area in the mountains. It’s about two hours by train, about 150 miles from Tokyo, in the same prefecture of my family. A lot of people (including my wife and daughter) evacuated to Karuizawa during the war, and it is a significant place in our family life.



Mr. Nagai, the attaché in Germany, had come back to Japan before me. He wasn’t active any longer as a diplomat, but he had become an influential member of the Japan Foreign Trade Council, a private organization for promoting trade. I went to work there for Mr. Nagai as an expert on Germany. The wartime economy was a big

problem for Japan, and the council was interested in how such an economy could be controlled and arranged.

In my work I made more money than the average Japanese, so my standard of living was higher; and, of course, I had the money I had brought from Germany. I was quite well off and still young enough to think about the future, about how I could secure my life, but everything was fluid. The political situation was very turbulent and very dark, and we anticipated that someday war would be coming. You cannot plan anything in that situation. I couldn't think about my future; just had to let it go as it goes.

In 1941 we moved from Koenji to Roppongi. My wife wanted a more Westernized house and I wanted to be closer to the center of Tokyo. The new house was a Japanese idea of a Western house—it had many Japanese features, but except for the maid's room it was Western. (If I had lived alone, I may never have gotten a house like that. To this day, I sometimes wish I had a Japanese room where I could be comfortable.)

I began to feel that war between the United States and Japan might happen. Developments were tending in that direction, and I didn't foresee success for Japan, because I knew there was a shortage of materiel and organization. Organization in a Japanese way is quite good, but it is not suitable for modern war. Japan thought that they would win by spirit alone, which was unrealistic.

When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, I heard about it on the radio. That morning army headquarters made an announcement. A couple of days later our navy planes sank the *H.M.S. Prince of Wales* and one more big ship. All of Japan was excited about that so-called "victory." But I thought it was only temporary, because if we sank British or American ships, they could replace them. If we lost our ships, though, we could not rebuild them.

America had material power, you see. I did not have any trust in Japanese material power. Our businessmen were very suspicious about the probabilities of the war. How far could we go with this? (I could express this opinion in my home or my office, but not in public.)



I was in the second reserve in the army, though we didn't train. In the meantime I was considered to be a person who was important for the mobilization of the wartime economy, so they were not allowed to draft me for the front. During the war I stayed in Tokyo while my wife and daughter lived in Karuizawa. Travel was restricted. Even in the mountainous areas, people needed special permission to travel from one little town to the next by train; but my wife could travel, because she was a physician and could always get a ticket.

The first big bombing of Tokyo came on February 10, 1945. One hundred and fifty miles away my family could feel the windows shaking in their house, because Japanese houses are not built solid. The day after the bombing I wanted to go see my family, but it was almost impossible. It was chaos. Somehow I got on the train. People hung onto the platforms at the front and back of each car; nobody had to buy tickets, only to get in as they could. My daughter remembers that after the bombing, Thea told her that Japan was losing the war, and the war would be over soon, but she must never repeat this in school.

After Germany surrendered on May 8, it was frowned upon to speak German publicly. There was no law against it, but police who were "ignorant" of the non-existence of this law would give individuals a hard time. Therefore, my wife and daughter and I had to speak Japanese in public; but to the last day of my wife's life, in November of 1980, we always spoke German at home.

There were continual minor bombings of Tokyo. The next major bombing began in May. Minor bombings did not occur near my house, and I wasn't at home during any of the major bombings, which continued until the end of the war. When a bomb fell right through our house, destroying it completely, I was elsewhere in Tokyo. We had already taken most of our things out of the house, so I did not lose many belongings. The important thing was we were happy if we could save our own lives, and no particular friend of mine was lost during the war.

In the last months of the war, incendiary bombs were falling on Tokyo. Other men and I were supposedly protecting the city. I slept in my clothes and my shoes, because anytime an alarm sounded I had to run out with water and blankets for those in need. Everybody was happy when we could get some rice or some vegetables to eat, but there was no possibility of sitting down and having a meal . . . we often ate dry soybeans. Sometimes I went to the office, though we had nothing to do. Nothing was functioning. We had conversations and talked about the war. Typically, people did not blame the Americans for the deaths and damage of bombing; rather, they blamed the war. That's the Japanese attitude. I cannot have any feeling against Americans; it's impossible. How the war came out was, for us, a historical conclusion. We are all historians!



By the end of World War II, all of our savings were gone. During our first years in Japan, I had spent money lavishly, eating expensive Japanese food, buying many things. I also sent my wife and daughter to Karuizawa every year, and they spent their summers there. We were all there when the war ended. Two days following the August 15 declaration of unconditional surrender, many American soldiers came to Karuizawa. My wife was out

trying to get some vegetables and rice on the black market, and she brought home such a packet of American cigarettes! Japan had nothing to eat, nothing . . . but my wife's connections with the American soldiers helped us.

Immediately after the war was over, the main thing was to get my family back to Tokyo from the mountains. My wife took the train to Tokyo to look for a job with the occupation forces, and she found work as a doctor with PACUSA, the Pacific Air Command, USA. (It later changed names to FEAF, Far East Air Force.) They needed to take care of the thousands of Japanese employed by the American occupation, and they wanted to hire Japanese doctors for this purpose. Her pay was the equivalent of two hundred dollars a month, an enormous amount of money.

There was total destruction in Japan. Everything was in ashes. Everything was flattened. Even after my wife got a job, our family had to live in separate places because no one place could accommodate the three of us. My wife and daughter roomed with a large family that had been her wartime patients. They had six children, and they said they could take one more. They lived near my daughter's school, and my wife commuted by public transportation to her job in the center of Tokyo. I lived in an upstairs room in the house of a lady who was a relative and who had accompanied my mother to the station when we first returned from Germany. Her husband was a physician, and their house had not been bombed.

Though our Western-style house in Roppongi had been bombed, the one next to it, which had a mirror-image floor plan, had not, and in 1946 we rented it from the same landlord as before the war. We later bought the house we were renting when the landlord told us we must buy it or move out.



To buy the house, my wife went to Muramatsu and borrowed some money. As security she used two eighteen-karat gold watches that had belonged to her father. Yoshi believes that it couldn't possibly have been enough collateral, but Thea had some strange ideas about gold—German gold was better, therefore more valuable, than other gold. And the people she borrowed the money from felt very indebted to her. Years before, in Karuizawa, their baby had been ill, and Thea was called by another doctor at the hospital who said he couldn't save the baby. Instead of having a vacation, she saved the baby, and the baby lived and is now my daughter's age. Therefore, they were indebted to her, so they loaned her the money. The house we bought still belongs to us; I live there. (We later bought a house in Karuizawa because my wife and daughter spent every summer at this resort, even before the war.)



At the end of the war, the organizations of big Japanese companies were dissolved, because the occupation wanted to eliminate Japanese economic power. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry was an exception; it was, I think, the only organization that was allowed. The big companies were members, of course, but thousands of small companies and businesses were also members. I had many acquaintances at the Chamber, and I went there every day, but I had no job. For the first four years after the war I really had nothing to do. I spent a lot of my time talking to other people about the war in a place that was like the Romanisches Café, where I had spent much time in Germany. My wife continued working for the occupation forces, and on weekends our family would get together.

I was unemployed until 1949, when the Americans changed their policy. With the victory of Mao Tse-tung's

communist forces in China, the United States no longer wished to weaken Japan, especially economically. It was a 180 degree turnaround, and the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry became very busy to promote the industries that had opposed the American army. They were told by General MacArthur's headquarters that they should reopen the trade between Japan and Germany, Italy, and other European countries that had been forbidden. I was asked by the Chamber to re-form the unit for promoting that trade. I had to contact all the people who had been engaged in German or Italian trade in the past and gather them together and make up an organization. This direction came from the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and MacArthur's headquarters.

Mr. Takahashi was president of the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce at the time. The managing director, Senzo Shizaka, had been Dr. Alexander Nagai's classmate. Shizaka asked Nagai to create the Japan-Europe Trade Association, and Nagai replied, "Only with Tezuka." He said that I should do that job. We were to work together again.

The Trade Association was nominally independent of the Chamber of Commerce, but it was really part of it. I was the director of the Association. Nagai also had the title of director, but the daily business was actually conducted by me. Nagai was more elderly and he could not do much, but he was the liaison between the Trade Association and the Chamber of Commerce. One of our two other permanent professional employees was a Japanese admiral who had been an attaché in Berlin. His name was Yokoi. I had known him in Berlin, but I had nothing to do with hiring him. The other person was a woman whose name I have forgotten. For secretarial and clerical staff, we used the Chamber of Commerce staff.

The first thing we did was make contact with all those people who were working before the war for the German-Italian Trade organization or with those business people who were somehow connected to this European-Japan trade. There were a number of Germans and mostly, of course, Japanese. Many of them were jobless, because all those organizations had been dissolved. Everything was confused. Even the supply to the American army in Japan was not yet very orderly.

I contacted all those people and made them members of this organization. Then I compiled information about each and disseminated it to the members so they could again make contact with their former partners and businessmen outside and inside. This was my job, to reorganize and restore all the contacts. I did not travel to Europe, though, as we could not travel unless we had very special permission. We could not do anything without the permission of U.S. Army headquarters.

The German merchant industry was in the same position as the Japanese industry, and we thought that Germany and Japan should come together in trade. The headquarters of the American occupation in Germany was in Frankfurt, and from these headquarters an American lieutenant colonel came to Japan. He had a special purpose to promote German trade and to advise the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce on what we could and should do. There were so many things we didn't know, and he gave us manufacturing advice, sales advice, everything.

I worked for one year with the Japan-Europe Trade Association, from 1949 to the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, and then I began commuting to Yokohama every day representing the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce as liaison division head. When the Korean War broke out, MacArthur set up a "requirement

headquarters” in Yokohama for all kinds of goods that were necessary to the war, and that gave Japanese industry new momentum to recover. My job was to try to stimulate trade with the American military. For a year, every day I had to go to Yokohama to MacArthur’s special requirement headquarters to arrange for anything that was needed for the Korean War, like barbed wire, food, and other supplies . . . though the main part of the food came from the United States directly. I was quite amazed at the war needs.

I was head of the trade division, but I also dealt with all overseas programs: export-import, conference arranging, trade missions, all of these things. I had monthly meetings with the chief of the economic division of MacArthur’s headquarters. His name was Major General Marcotte. Every month I also had to organize a meeting between General Marcotte, a representative of the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce, and about thirty to fifty other people who would present their wishes and requests: “We need more coal, or we need more . . .” At the meetings all those opinions and wishes were exchanged. We continued to do this until American occupation of Japan ended in 1952. This was a period when the contact of the American headquarters with the Japanese business people was not yet so smooth, so it was very necessary and was much appreciated by the headquarters. The Japanese merchants and business people also appreciated our efforts.



After I went to work for the Chamber of Commerce in 1950, my wife went into private practice. We were able to save a little money. We bought our first car, an Austin, in the early 1950s, and we went to driving school together. Thea scored one more point than I did, and she always



“We bought our first car, an Austin, in the early 1950s.” Thea and Banzo.

laughed about that. To have a car for the first time represented a social change and a change in lifestyle. The ordinary Japanese family could not have a car, because cars were not produced in Japan. You needed foreign currency to buy one, and you needed to show how you got it. Therefore, we bought the car in the name of my wife. She got the permission and a recommendation from the American army saying that, as a physician, she needed a car. Otherwise, we couldn't have bought it.

We were able to send my daughter to the United States in 1954. My wife wanted her to go. She had acquaintances there, and they gave her a tuition scholarship to the University of Texas. I was happy when she went to the United States—I saw the future of Japan as being very dark, so I thought she should go abroad. But later, of course, Japan's future looked like a rising sun.

When Yoshi went to the United States, I only wanted my only child to be happy. I had no particular ambition for her, but I always wanted her to do something that would span East and West, like being a translator at the UN. In a way, she was in a good position, because she came from two different cultural backgrounds. There are so many international organizations in America, and so I thought it was a good thing for her to go to America.



The first time I went to the United States was in 1957, for the Second Pacific Mayors and Chamber of Commerce Presidents Conference. All the mayors and presidents gathered. Some meetings were held in San Francisco, but the main conference was held in San Diego. All the chambers sent either their president or vice president or somebody to the conference. The Tokyo mayor did not come, but the chairman of the Tokyo parliament attended.



Thea and Banzo Tezuka with daughter Yoshi and her two children, 1965.

Everything in the United States was new to me, but the life pattern of American people was somewhat known to me already through the occupation people who were everywhere in Japan. (My wife and I had been invited to many events by them.) My impression was the United States was just great. I thought it was spacious. The car traffic was beyond my imagination, because nobody can move anymore without a car. It's a new society for me.

One memorable trip I took to America was in 1960. The Japan-America Security Treaty was devised, and it had to be signed, and Japan sent a mission for that with the prime minister as head and the president of the Chamber of Commerce as representative for the whole of industry. I was with the delegation. We went to Washington, and I got to shake hands with President Eisenhower. That was a very remarkable occasion for me.

Eventually, in the mid-1960s, the president of the Chamber of Commerce promoted me from director to executive director. As executive director, a car always came to pick me up. Having a chauffeur was not to my taste, but I had no choice. The chauffeur came for me every morning at about 9:30, and in the evenings there were many parties. There were also parties on Saturdays and Sundays. I had to go from one gathering to the next. There were also many conferences I attended outside Tokyo.

The president of the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce is customarily the president of the Japan Chamber of Commerce. There are about six hundred chambers of commerce throughout Japan. They are all united to form one Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. I was executive director, and there was a managing director who came from the ministry—he was a member of the government. For the Japan and Tokyo Chambers, the



president and managing director were (and still are) always the same.

When I was with the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce, we had about four hundred employees. There were very few who did not have academic credentials. The three chauffeurs and I did not have academic credentials, and there was a woman janitor. Those were the only people. It was a huge organization, and I had many honorary positions as well. I was a member of the Miss Tokyo selection committee for six years, which was an annual event. There was also an annual abacus education committee, of which I was chairman. The abacus is still in wide use in Japan, so there were hundreds of people who came to test for this. I had to give an introductory speech. It was interesting, because some people from Australia used to come to compete in that. I was also on the deliberations committee and oversaw communications, and also probationary member of the ministry of education committee, and so on and so on . . . about forty honorary jobs in all to attend to.

In 1972, I retired as executive director after about six years in the position. I then was named secretary general of the Confederation of Asian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. This was an honorary position. I worked there for only two years. Then I had an office desk at the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan for years after I retired. There, I was an advisor. Dr. Grossman was a managing director and asked me to work there after I offered my services, and they gave me a bonus twice a year for this service. I also continued to be an advisor to the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry after I retired. They, too, would give me twice-yearly bonuses. Although I had nothing routine to do, I had a desk and was occasionally asked to do something.

I could go there every day, and it was nice to have a place to go. I wanted to keep working after I retired.



I remain fond of Western art and architecture, and I am a great sumo fan. I used to watch sumo matches on TV whenever I could. My wife would watch with me to keep me company. She said she disliked it, but in later years she could not live without sumo! As far as other interests and diversions go, after I returned to Japan from Germany, I played tennis; that was one of the ways I relaxed. The number one Japanese sport is baseball, and the business people enjoy golf . . . but I do not. Sometimes I went on excursions in the car with my wife. Sometimes I played with my granddaughter, Angie. We also went to many parties.

As part of my work, I had traveled abroad; I had taken forty or fifty trips to foreign countries for my work, but none for my own entertainment. On my last foreign trip—to India and Kathmandu, Nepal—I took my wife along with me, but I was fed up with traveling, because everybody's always so busy, and you have no time of your own. In 1977 or 1978, I took a trip to Israel. It was a business and pleasure trip. The main interest, of course, was for my wife, as she had some relatives there; but history and archaeology are great interests of mine, and I had always wanted to go to Israel too. This trip was very interesting to me personally. I had to work for the business, but I was not fully, 100 percent working with my heart.



My daughter, Yoshi, received a master's degree in Library Science from the University of Texas in 1970. She is a librarian at the University of Nevada, Reno. I have been visiting Reno since before 1976, I think. I have been coming annually since then, and some years twice.

Yoshi has taken me everywhere. We have gone to Lake Tahoe, Pyramid Lake, Yosemite National Park. Sometimes I accompany the visiting Tottori University students. The Grand Canyon was a most interesting place for me. Our country's landscape is pastoral, like Switzerland, so we don't have this kind of desert.

When in Reno, I have a daily routine. I walk from near the fairgrounds to the Eldorado, where I have lunch. Then after lunch, I walk to the university campus. There I read in the library in the afternoon—the *Wall Street Journal* and *Der Spiegel*. We have gone to several movies this year, and in winter we go to Christmas parties. I went on an excursion in the desert to the east of Fallon once. Twice I had a chance to visit museums.



Editor's note: *This concludes Banzo Tezuka's story as recorded during five sessions in late December, 1989 and early January, 1990. At that time I planned to interview Mr. Tezuka again when he returned to Reno the following year, exploring in greater depth the important themes which had emerged in this sketch of his life history. Unfortunately, Mr. Tezuka's health began to fail in 1990. Although he and his daughter reviewed and corrected the transcript, additional interviewing proved to be impossible. Mr. Tezuka died on January 3, 1994.*

*Incomplete though it may be, Banzo Tezuka's oral history provides an interesting and informative glimpse of cultures and historical events that are little known and poorly understood by most Nevadans. We are pleased to add it to the Oral History Program's collection.*



## INDEX

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### B

Bade, Ernst, 26, 41  
Beltz, Erwin, 28-29  
Beltz, Toku, 28-29  
Berger, Thea, see Tezuka,  
Thea Berger  
Berlin, Germany, 19-20,  
21, 27-28, 29, 32, 37,  
38, 40  
Berlin Germany, Japanese  
in, 21, 27, 29, 40  
Bohemians, 35-36

### C

Confederation of Asian  
Chambers of Com-  
merce and Industry,  
59

### D

*Der Kongress Tanzt (Con-  
gress Dances)*(film),  
27

### E

Education (Japan), 6, 11

### F

Far East Air Force (FEAF),  
see Pacific Air Force  
Command, USA  
Farman Goliath (plane), 20

### G

German Chamber of Com-  
merce and Industry  
(Japan), 59  
German-Italian Trade  
organization, 53

### H

Hendricks, Angie, 60  
Hendricks, Yoshi Tezuka,  
37-39, 44, 48, 49, 56,  
60

Hirooka-mura Yoshida,  
Japan, 2-3, 6

## **I**

Imperial University, 9, 28  
Inheritance rules (Japan), 7

## **J**

Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry,  
58-59  
Japan Foreign Trade Council, 46  
Japan-America Security Treaty, 58  
Japan-Europe Trade Association, 52  
Japanese Embassy (Berlin, Germany), 31-33, 37, 42  
Jinjo-koto Shogakko (school), 6

## **K**

Karuizawa, Japan, 46, 48, 49, 51  
Kobayashi, 29  
Koenji (Tokyo, Japan), 45, 46, 47  
Korean War, 53

## **M**

MacArthur, General Douglas, 52, 53  
Manchuri, Manchuria, 42-43  
Manchuria, 42-43  
Marcotte, Major General, 54  
Marriage (Japan), 2, 7  
Matsumoto, Japan, 2-3, 5, 6  
Matsumoto Fukushima High School, 6-8  
Meiji restoration (Japan), 1-2  
Moscow, Russia, 41

## **N**

Nagai, Alexander, 29, 31, 46, 52  
Nazi Party, 31, 32, 36  
Nippon Yusen Kaisha (NYK), 13-16

## **P**

Pacific Air Command, USA (PACUSA), 50  
Pearl Harbor, 47

## **R**

Remarque, Erich Maria, 26  
Ritter, Karl, 41

Romanisches Café (Berlin,  
Germany), 23-27, 35,  
38  
Roppongi (Tokyo, Japan),  
47, 50  
Russia, 41-42

## S

Second Pacific Mayors and  
Chamber of Com-  
merce Presidents  
Conference, 56  
Seoul, Korea, 43  
Shizaka, Senzo, 52  
*Storm Over Asia* (film), 27  
*Suzwa Maru* (ship), 13-16

## T

Takahashi, Mr., 52  
Tezuka (family name), 1  
Tezuka, Ichimatsu, 2, 3, 4,  
7, 9  
Tezuka, Moto, 1, 10, 11-13,  
29  
Tezuka, Ryohei, 7, 9  
Tezuka, Shoichiro, 7, 9, 10  
Tezuka, Thea Berger, 35-40,  
43, 44, 45-46, 47, 48,  
49-51, 54, 60  
Tezuka, Yoshi, see  
Hendricks, Yoshi  
Tezuka  
Tokiba (restaurant in  
Berlin, Germany), 29

Tokyo, Japan, 45, 46, 47,  
48, 56  
Tokyo, Japan, bombing of,  
48, 49  
Tokyo Chamber of Com-  
merce and Industry,  
51-53, 54, 58-59  
Tokyo University, see  
Imperial University  
Trans-Siberian Railway, 13,  
41-42

## W

Waseda University, 9  
World War II, 40, 47-50

## Y

Yokohama, Japan, 53, 54  
Yokoi, 52  
Yonezawa, Buehi, 11, 20  
Yonezawa, Ichiro, 11, 20

## Z

*Zaidou Nihonjin Kai* (club  
in Berlin, Germany),  
29, 31